

Iraqis employ low-tech tactics to counter allies

EDITOR'S NOTE — AP correspondent Dilip Ganguly arrived in Jordan on Sunday after an eight-day assignment in Baghdad and filed the following dispatch.

By Dilip Ganguly
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — As dawn breaks over Baghdad, men wearing gloves and heavy boots fan out to collect discarded tyres, then set them afire. Other residents search for old clothes, bits of plastic — anything that burns.

It's a strange spectacle, but the aim is simple: to create a thick, black smokescreen that might help shield the capital from allied air strikes.

The bonfires are among many low-technology methods used by the war-hardened Iraqis in their effort to offset the far superior military might of the U.S.-led forces.

Housewives separate papers and other inflammable materials before throwing the daily garbage away. Teenagers, unmindful of the air raid sirens, collect old shoes, rubbers, scraps of plastic and other refuse that will smoulder smokily.

The campaign is spearheaded by members of the Popular Army.

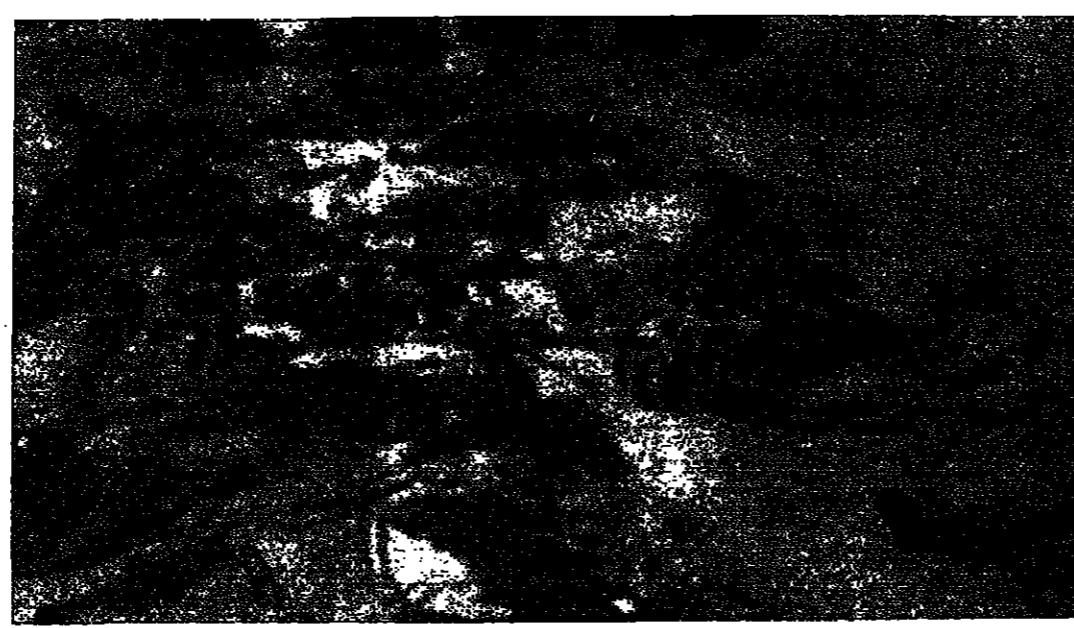
In every corner of this sprawling city of four million people, they search for discarded tyres. They even remove tyres from stranded or broken-down vehicles, which abound in war-time Iraq because of the lack of spare parts.

The collected tyres are set on fire under the bridges over the Tigris River that connect the western and eastern districts of Baghdad.

Tyres also are burnt elsewhere in the city, sometimes spewing smoke so thick that the sun is blotted out.

Besides reducing the visibility of allied pilots, the smoke may give a false impression to allied surveillance satellites that parts of Baghdad are burning.

The tyre tactic is one of the many ways the Iraqis improvise in their battle against the allied forces.



Bodies of victims of an allied air attack on a civilian bomb shelter recovered from the debris.

"We may not be Rambo and we may not have star wars capabilities, but we know how to defend ourself," said a member of the Popular Army militia who did not give his name.

The militia is Iraq's second line of defence, trained in civil defence and also in hand-to-hand combat methods in case the war over Kuwait reaches Baghdad.

Bags made of jute, collected by Popular Army militia and civilians, are wrapped around the iron railings of the bridges over the Tigris.

Small tree branches and green leaves are fixed to the bags in an attempt to camouflage the bridges from air attack.

Twelve bridges, including six in the central part of the city, connect the two sectors. Four of the bridges have now been destroyed by allied bombing raids.

"We know the jute bags and the tree branches may not save the bridges, but at least we are trying to save our city with whatever we have," said an Iraqi civil defence official.

Some car owners try their own hand at camouflage, smearing their vehicles with mud paste.

Four weeks of intense bombing has had an impact of Baghdad's residents.

There is, however, no visible sign of panic. Residents disregard the air raid sirens, and even the raids themselves, to go about their businesses.

Most of the residents have accepted the fact that their life now depends on their fate, not hiding in bomb shelters.

In Baghdad alone, at least 200 different targets have been hit during the air offensive.

In the first two weeks military targets and communication centres were hit. More recently, the raids have destroyed government and private buildings across the city.

One of the latest targets was a \$16-million conference centre near the Al Rashed Hotel.

Red Cross chief says Palestinian situation serious, efforts continue

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Sunday described as serious the situation in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip where a blanket curfew is in force since the outbreak of the Gulf war on Jan. 17.

Affirming that the ICRC was facing "problems" in implementation of the Geneva conventions in the occupied territories, Cornelio Sommaruga also said that the Red Cross was seeking to extend assistance to victims of conflict.

"We know that the problem in the (occupied) territories is serious... and the long curfew has not made the situation more favourable to the citizens (there)," he told a press conference. "We are not directly involved (in the programme), but are contributing to it through other means," he said and pointed out that the main task of the Red Cross was to extend assistance to victims of the conflict.

Mr. Sommaruga, who also held talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and senior officials, was replying to a question whether the Geneva-based humanitarian organisation was helping Jordan help its population deal with the economic crisis brought in by the Gulf crisis.

"We are working in confidentiality" in the occupied territories, including Israeli prison camps where thousands of Palestinians are detained by the Israeli army, he said. He did not elaborate.

Earlier, Mr. Sommaruga said that the Red Cross was in touch with the Israeli authorities on the curfew as well as travel curbs which, according to reports, have exacerbated the misery of the 1.75 million Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We are in contact with the Israeli authorities in order that they would respect all provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention" on the treatment of civilians under occupation, he said.

Israel has imposed a de facto ban on Palestinians who are permanent residents of the occupied territories from crossing from East Bank to the West Bank while allowing easy flow in the reverse direction.

Mr. Sommaruga said he had "no comment" when asked whether he had any indication whether the Israeli occupation authorities might be planning a mass expulsion of the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip across the river to Jordan.

"I do not know anything about it,"

Mr. Sommaruga also said that the ICRC was aware of the

economy-related humanitarian problems faced by Jordanians as a result of the Gulf crisis and was contributing to efforts to address the problems as part of a broader programme.

"This is a subject that we discussed during our meeting with Her Majesty Queen Noor (on Saturday)," Mr. Sommaruga told the press conference. "We are not directly involved (in the programme), but are contributing to it through other means," he said and pointed out that the main task of the Red Cross was to extend assistance to victims of the conflict.

Mr. Sommaruga, who also held talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and senior officials, was replying to a question whether the Geneva-based humanitarian organisation was helping Jordan help its population deal with the economic crisis brought in by the Gulf crisis.

A recent survey has indicated that the accumulated economic problems of Jordan had been compounded by the Gulf crisis to the extent that over one million of people were living under the poverty line i.e. an average household earning less than JD89 per month, and about 130,000 to 160,000 of them living in "absolute poverty" i.e. households unable to meet their basic food requirements.

The ICRC president, who left Amman for Geneva late in the day, indicated that he did not make headway in efforts to get Iraqi permission to meet allied airmen and soldiers captured in the 32-day-old war.

Informants sources said in a meeting with the ICRC chief, Iraqi Ambassador Noor Ismail Al Weiss reiterated the Iraqi view that such access would be made available only when Baghdad is honoured the Geneva conventions and stopped attacking civilian targets. The ambassador, however, also said that Red Cross visits to the prisoners of war (PoWs) could be arranged through "other channels" at a later unspecified stage, said the source without elaboration.

The Red Cross chief told the press conference that his discussions in Amman dealt with "neutral humanitarian assistance" to victims of the war in both Iraq

and Kuwait as well as PoWs.

He admitted that the Red Cross had been unable to establish rapport with the Iraqi leadership and expressed confidence that things could better once such contacts were established.

"There is a certain problem of communication between the ICRC and the Iraqi government at the higher political level, and therefore this is one of the reasons I would like to go personally to Baghdad," he said.

A planned meeting between a senior official of the Iraqi Red Crescent and Mr. Sommaruga failed to materialise Sunday. The official's visit to Jordan for the meeting was delayed, reports said.

Creating a "neutral security zone" to protect civilians, evacuating and treating the wounded, protecting religious and holy places, and ensuring the supply of medicaments and relief supplies are the main objectives of the Red Cross, Mr. Sommaruga said.

U.N. supplies

Reuter adds: Trucks carrying 50 tonnes of emergency medical supplies for the treatment of children and mothers arrived safely in Baghdad Saturday, the United Nations announced.

Iraqi health and Red Crescent officials met the convoy at the Iraqi border town of Khoosar following requests from the U.N. groups that allied forces avoid dropping any bombs on its route.

A statement from the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), which organised the convoy in conjunction with the World Health Organisation, said a seven-member team from both agencies would spend a week evaluating essential health needs of women, children, the elderly and displaced people.

Shortly before the war broke out, Iraq requested that a U.N. team come to Baghdad to study its food and medical needs for vulnerable sections of the population. Since then Iraq has asked the Security Council for permission to transport food supplies to Iraq and, if possible, to Kuwait.

Iraq's ambassador, Kamal Kharrazi, in a speech to the Security Council Friday, criticised the council for not having responded yet to Tehran's request to send food.

Environmental concerns also are increasing in Iran, Iraq's neighbour to the east.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency said black rain began to fall Sunday in the western Iranian province of Ilam, tainting water and "agricultural resources."

It said the black rain was caused by smoke from bombed oil installations and other targets in areas of eastern Iraq bordering Iran.

Iran's state radio reported that a "state of emergency" had been declared in Tehran, the capital, after air pollution reached critical levels at midday Sunday.

On Saturday, Congress Party General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad said the party might not support the government in a vote of no confidence if the refuelling did not stop within five days

sharply.

Because of this, some Bush

advisers expect him to settle for nothing less than President Saddam's removal and the destruction of Baghdad's war-making capability, the newspaper added.

"He's not ready for this war to be over quite yet because there's still too much of Saddam's military machine left," a senior government official said.

The paper quoted sources close to the president as saying Mr. Bush has grown increasingly quiet and reflective as the war has progressed.

"The president is much quieter than at any time that I've seen him over the past 10 years. He's calm, too, but he's also angry. You can see that anger in his eyes," another source added.

"It's a moral as well as strategic

Epidemics threaten Baghdad

Combined agency dispatches

RESIDENTS OF Baghdad face the threat of epidemics because allied air raids have wrecked the sewage system and disrupted water supplies, the capital's mayor said Sunday.

Major Khalid Abdul Munim told reporters that cholera and typhoid "might set in soon if the people continue having no clean drinking water."

He said most of the city's water purification plants are now out of order, either because they suffered damage from allied air strikes or because there is no electricity to run them.

"People are coming to me complaining, but I have only my sympathy to offer them," he said.

In recent weeks, Baghdad residents have had no electricity and, at best, intermittent water supplies.

Residents of one well-to-do neighbourhood said they received water one day a week.

But most residents in Saddam Township, a low-income area that is home to 750,000 people, have to get their water from a canal that is about two kilometres away.

"Some of us even go to the Tigris River to get water for drinking or to have a shower," said one of the district's residents. He did not give his name.

Mr. Abdul Munim said the Tigris was highly polluted and unfit for drinking.

He said the city needs international aid to help avoid "an environmental disaster."

Delegates from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were in Iraq Sunday, beginning an assessment of war-related damage to the environment and the impact on people, especially children.

The mayor said that due to bad sanitation caused by the lack of clean water, epidemics of typhoid and cholera were very likely.

British newspaper Sunday quoted Iraqi Health Minister Mohammad Sayed as saying "Baghdad faced a 'very severe risk' of diseases such as diarrhoea, salmonella and hepatitis."

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British television showed pictures of families washing clothes on the banks of the Tigris and filling pots with water. Other pictures showed children lading water from puddles into containers.

Trees were being cut for firewood, which Sadler said was illegal before the war.

Sadler said Baghdad's water distribution network collapsed almost immediately after the war began because of massive destruction to power plants.

The mayor said 75 per cent of the city's ability to generate electricity has been lost due to allied bombing.

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Israeli ambassador in U.S. to stay, despite row

Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Baker recently told Congress he was holding up loan guarantees to help absorb Soviet Jews pouring into Israel until he had details about settlement plans in the occupied territories.

Mr. Shoval said every time Israel provided information, the United States demanded more.

But Foreign Minister David Levy said he had spoken to the ambassador who expressed regret.

Mr. Zucker recently revealed that Israel plans to build 12,000 new flats for 50,000 settlers in occupied territories by 1993 but was not passing the information to Washington.

"They don't lie about it but they didn't give them the figures," he said.

Israel's relations with the Bush administration had reached a peak when Jerusalem bowed to U.S. requests to stay out of the Gulf war and not retaliate for Iraqi missile attacks.

The U.S. housing guarantees have been held up for months because Washington wants stronger assurances that the thousands of Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel will not be settled in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Levy said Israel last week sent all the clarifications that the U.S. government had sought.

Speaking in an Israel Television interview, Mr. Levy said it may be the worst run-in with the United States that the current government has had.

Mr. Shoval accused the United States of giving Israel the "run-around" on its request for \$400 million in loan guarantees to help build housing for hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants.

He also complained that Israel had received no compensation for "huge losses" incurred as a result of the Gulf war and demanded that it need be met.

One U.S. official said Israel had already received U.S. aid in an airlift of Patriot missile batteries at the beginning of the war to defend it against Iraqi missile attacks.

Washington has long opposed Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Bush waging personal war against Saddam — paper

LOS ANGELES (R) — The Los Angeles Times said Sunday that U.S. President George Bush refers to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in private as a "lying SOB

sador in
despite
Speaker
ends visit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Speaker of Algeria's parliament, Abdul Aziz Belkadem, Sunday wound up a several day visit to Jordan during which he was received in audience by His Majesty King Hussein along with other members of the International Movement for Peace.

Belkadem, who arrived here with the speaker of the Yemeni parliament, also held talks with the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and other government officials and parliamentarians on the Gulf question and other Arab affairs. Belkadem, along with his counterparts from Yemen, Palestine, and Jordan, Friday issued a joint statement backing the Iraqi initiative of accepting U.N. Security Council resolution 660 with the aim of reestablishing peace and stability in the Gulf region.

The joint statement appealed to the parliaments of peace-loving nations to support the Iraqi initiative and put an end to the devastating war in the Gulf.

The joint appeal followed several meetings at the parliament house in Amman during which these parliamentarians and members of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament took part.

Atiqa outlines UNDP work in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Since the establishment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1966 fruitful U.N.-Jordanian cooperation has been achieved, and more than 214 projects were either carried out or being implemented as a result, according to U.N. resident representative here, Ali Atiqa.

Atiqa was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that \$60.8 million have been spent on joint U.N.-Jordanian projects so far, mainly on human resources development and socio-economic schemes.

Atiqa said that the UNDP has been implementing 36 projects in health, agriculture, industry, science and technology, education, culture, manpower development and public services, some of which were still being carried out.

Atiqa's statement followed by UNDP annual report which said that through the implementation of 214 projects in more than 20 sectors of Jordan's economic and social development plans, UNDP has brought to Jordan the experience of more than 650 international professional experts, trained over 1100 Jordanian nationals abroad and provided about \$12 million worth of equipment installed in various sectors.

The report noted that major UNDP contributions were in strengthening the national indigenous capacity in national development planning and policy, human resources development like vocational education, training and basic sciences as well as forestry, rainfed areas, fisheries, livestock wealth, civil aviation, telecommunications, housing, energy and health.

The report said that Jordan's record in social and economic development over the last four decades has been outstanding. In spite of its scarce natural resources and a heavy burden of consequences of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jordan was able to develop a social and economic structure with many strengths.

At present, Atiqa said in his statement to Petra, the UNDP was carrying out a project to help Jordan diversify its industrial exports by providing the essential expertise.

Dimona

(Continued from page 1)

No arrests were made and police have opened an investigation.

At a Jewish communal settlement in the occupied Gaza Strip, Nidal Nordan was seriously injured when he opened the door to Abu Zeid's irrigation system control room setting off a homemade bomb, an army spokesman said.

Nordan, a 21-year-old conscript soldier, was on leave and was visiting the kibbutz which is 1st south of Gaza City in the strip, Israel Radio said.

He was pronounced in moderate to serious condition after an operation.

UNESCO closes Amman office; U.N. officials say measure temporary

By Saeda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Nearly 25 employees lost their jobs and around seven others had their income reduced to less than half following UNESCO's Paris headquarters decision to close down its office in Amman. However, U.N. officials in Amman say that the closure is temporary and that it does not mean that other U.N. organisations will follow suit.

Senior U.N. officials say they are in contact with the U.N. head office in New York to ensure that all U.N. experts who left the country recently would return to their work.

"UNESCO's regional office in Amman is basically involved in research and scientific projects which can be adjourned at the moment," Franck de Yonge, UNRWA's director in Amman told the Jordan Times. "UNICEF and UNRWA have actually increased their staff," he said.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, closed down its offices on Jan. 15 after receiving a telex order from Paris, employees said.

Sources with very close links to the U.N. say that the absence

of an office director, at the time "have accelerated the process. The last office director, Mohammad Kathem retired only in December."

Most of UNESCO's U.N. Educational Bureau for Arab States' international staff, according to Jordanian employees, left on Jan. 10. The remaining staff, mostly Jordanians, received a memo on Jan. 15 announcing that the office closure was "temporary due to the current situation and until further notice."

All projects and development programmes were temporarily put to a halt. International staff remained who in Jordan told employees that those who left will for sure return within two weeks.

"They (UNESCO's remaining staff) have reassured us that everything will go back to normal in a short period of time," one employee said. "It was all done so quickly and suddenly that we did not have the time to find out what was really happening."

Some employees, who demanded not to be named, said that they were angry over the way their "dismissal" was announced giving them no chance to look out for other jobs.

"At the beginning, I waited for two weeks hoping that they will return," a one-year-old employee said. "At present, and after one month, I came to realise that time is running out and I have to look out for another job."

About 25 employees, with short-term contracts ranging from 3 to 6 months, have lost their jobs, some of them have worked for the office for more than three years. About seven others, seconded from the Ministry of Education, were returned to their previous jobs with their income reduced to less than half.

"It is not only that I am out of the job at the moment, but I also have nothing to prove that I have actually worked for UNESCO, or if I worked efficiently or not," said one employee. "The move was so sudden, he says that it left him "no time" to ask for a recommendation.

U.N. officials in Amman maintain that the closure of UNESCO office does not mean that other U.N. offices will close their operations in Jordan earlier to return.

"We are now more attached to our work and the responsibilities that were added on us due to the Gulf crisis," UNICEF's senior project officer Nuhad Kanawati said. "We

have already carried out many projects for the help of Iraqi children and we are more determined to complete our humanitarian mission, especially at this time and under these circumstances."

Dr. Ali Attiqa, the U.N. resident representative in Jordan insists that the closing down of UNESCO office in Amman will in no way affect the work of other U.N. organisations. "I do not know the real circumstances that led to this situation, but they are not related in any way to other U.N. organisations," he said. "This is the time to help Jordan, for it has always been a faithful member of the United Nations."

Dr. Attiqa announced Sunday that extensive contacts are going on at the moment with officials in the U.N. headquarters to make it possible for all foreign experts who have left Jordan earlier to return.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Attiqa said that the state of stability and tranquility in Jordan at present will encourage these experts to come back, affirming that their absence has not affected United Nations development programmes in the country.

Amman, Tehran move to reopen embassies soon

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iranian and Jordanian diplomats are expected in each other's capitals soon to reopen their diplomatic missions following the resumption of formal relations last month after a 10-year break, diplomatic sources said Sunday.

Mohammad Al Daher, the Jordanian charge d'affaires who was the last diplomat of the Kingdom to leave Tehran in 1983, is scheduled to leave for the Iranian capital this week to resume his post, a senior official said.

"It is only a matter of procedures," the official told the Jordan Times. Mr. Daher will proceed to Tehran and locate suitable buildings for the Jordanian mission and pave the way for the formal reopening of the embassy, he said.

Nara Ghian, Mr. Daher's counterpart, is expected in Amman this week, according to a diplomatic source. Mr. Ghian last served as charge d'affaires at the Iranian mission in Bahrain, the source said.

A diplomat from the Islamic republic's embassy in Damascus visited Amman over the weekend to inspect the premises of the Iranian mission here, the source said.

The building located between the Third and Fourth Circles, is owned by the Iranian government, while the Jordanian mission in Tehran was housed in a rented premises.

The Jordanian official said the Foreign Ministry had not named its ambassador to Iran yet; nor has Tehran designated its senior-most diplomat in Amman.

The official said there was no definite information yet on an expected visit to Amman by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.

"Mr. Velayati has an open invitation from Jordan which he has accepted," the official said. "Diplomatic exchanges need not be a hindrance, in view of the fact

that our foreign minister, (Taher Al Masri), received a most cordial and warm welcome when he visited Iran last month," he said.

"We have not been formally notified of any scheduled visit by Mr. Velayati to Amman," he added.

Earlier, other sources had indicated that Mr. Velayati might visit Amman on his way home from Bonn, where he is due Monday.

Diplomatic relations between Jordan and Iran were severed in January 1981 in the wake of the Kingdom's strong support for Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, which broke out in September 1980.

Pakistan has been looking after Jordanian interests in Tehran and Iranian interests in Amman since then.

With the end of the Iran-Iraq war with a ceasefire in August 1988, diplomatic contacts were revived, and formal relations were resumed with the signing of a protocol at the U.N. by the chief Jordanian and Iranian delegations to the world body in mid-January 1991.

Relations have warmed up also between the Jordanian and Iranian parliaments and several Jordanian delegations have visited Tehran. A group of Iranian parliamentarians visited Amman last week and a joint statement issued by the two legislative bodies indicated a large area of agreement between them, particularly in the context of the Gulf situation.

Trade between the two countries have also picked up. The first shipment of Jordanian phosphates to Iran, exported under a \$66 million supply contract, is expected to leave Jordan by the end of the month.

Senior officials have said that Jordan was considering oil imports from Iran to make up for the shortfalls in the flow from Iraq resulting from allied air attacks on Iraqi facilities as well as Jordanian oil tankers carrying Iraqi crude to the Kingdom.

JNRCS, ICRC heads review joint aid efforts

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Sunday reviewed joint efforts in humanitarian affairs in general and means of providing the Iraqi people with humanitarian assistance during the Gulf war in particular.

The heads of JNRCS and ICRC, Dr. Ahmad Abu Qoura and Cornelio Sommaruga, both expressed readiness to extend relief supplies to the Iraqi people during a meeting they held in Amman on the second day of Sommaruga's visit here to discuss ways to boost humanitarian efforts throughout the Gulf war.

During the meeting, Abu Qoura and Sommaruga discussed the agenda of the 26th international conference by world Red Cross and Red Crescent societies which will be held in November in Hungary.

Cooperation between JNRCS and the ICRC on the one hand and their efforts made in conjunction with other international relief agencies on the other

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Hassan visits army HQ

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday visited the army forces headquarter, where he met for a while with the Chief of Staff Gen. Fahd Abu Taleb and discussed with him a number of issues of interest to the Jordanian armed forces. Upon arrival at the headquarters, Prince Hassan was received by Gen. Abu Taleb, his assistants, the Royal Jordanian Airforce commander, and the inspector general.

Parliamentarians leave for Turkey today

AMMAN (Petra) — A joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, headed by Palestine National Council (PNC) Speaker Abdul Hamid Al Sayeh leaves Monday for Pakistan and Turkey to hold talks with officials, parliamentarians and representatives of the various parties in the two countries on the developments of the Gulf war. The delegation will also explain the new Iraqi initiative and the provocative role played by Israel and Zionism to destroy Iraq, which has pledged to liberate Palestine. The team will describe the American hegemony over the region and will promote the redistribution of wealth fairly. The delegation comprises the Upper and Lower House of Parliament members Ishaq Al Farhan and Fuad Al Khafat, as well as members of the PNC Abbas Zaki and Arafat Hijazi.

Arab medical teams go to Baghdad

AMMAN (Petra) — Two medical teams, including doctors from Mauritania and Palestine Sunday left for Baghdad, carrying with them quantities of medicine, medical supplies and baby milk, according to the Arab Doctors Union Secretary-General Hassan Khreis, who is also Chairman of the Arab Health Committee for supporting Iraq. Khreis said that the committee has received 20 tonnes of medicine and medical supplies from Tunisia and will receive similar quantities from Algeria, Tunisia and Yemen.

Education body denounces massacres in Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Association for the Education of the Children Sunday denounced the ugly massacre of Iraqi children and other civilians, carried out by the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. The association condemned the inhuman American and Western practices against the civilian population, and contested the credibility of their allegations of protecting human rights and their violation of the international convention on human rights as well as the other international covenants and conventions on human rights.

Iraqi weapon fetches JD 13,000 in auction

AMMAN (Petra) — An Iraqi Kalashnikov was sold Saturday for JD 13,000 at an auction held at the Automobile Exhibition. The public auction was a part of a fund-raising function sponsored by a number of restaurants and patisserie shops, in cooperation with the Arab Health Committee for supporting Iraq. The function included a dinner, proceeds from which will go towards buying medicine and food for the children of Iraq.

Commerce committee reviews activities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) stressed the important role Jordan has played in the world economy through its active participation in a number of international trade conferences. The committee called for putting an end to the irregular practices and the unnecessary harassment of ships heading to Aqaba port. The committee said that the general assembly of the ICC would meet in Amman on Feb. 28 to discuss a report prepared by the committee on Jordan's needs and its contribution to the world economy. It also said the assembly would recommend to the ICC that Jordan be exempted from paying its annual subscription in view of the hard economic circumstances the country is passing through.

House panel amends financial laws

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House's Financial Committee Sunday discussed a number of provisional laws relating to Central Bank work. After discussing these laws, the committee approved them having made some amendments. The meeting, which was chaired by Abdullah Al Nsour, was attended by the Central Bank of Jordan Governor, Mohammad Said Al Nabulsi. The House's Independent Bloc also held a meeting Sunday and elected Deputy Abdil Salam Freihat as rapporteur of the bloc, in succession to Dr. Mohammad Al Alwani, who was appointed Minister of Agriculture. The bloc also selected deputies Atef Al Butoush and Mahmoud Al Huweimel as a drafting and information committee.

Prince Hassan, Sommaruga discuss war impact on civilians, evacuees and Palestinian issue

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday discussed with president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, the impact of the Gulf war on civilian population and the need to find the best means to help civilians avoid the havoc of war.

Prince Hassan and Sommaruga stressed the need for directing special attention to the people in the occupied territories, saying that they have been hard hit by the Gulf crisis and the blanket curfew imposed on them since the outbreak of war on Jan. 17.

Such factors have caused shortages of basic commodities and drugs and contributed to the deterioration of the living conditions of people there, he noted.

Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath attended part of the meeting.

The Crown Prince also briefed the ICRC head on the situation of the civilian population in the occupied Arab territories.

Sommaruga stressed the need for protecting civilian areas and holy places from attacks by the warring parties.

They also reviewed the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in addressing the evacuees crisis in Jordan.

Commenting on the current

AOHR Jordan breaks silence

Committee highlights damages to Iraqi archaeological sites, educational and cultural centres

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — World journalists were urged Sunday to join hands in the fight against systematic destruction of cultural centres and archaeological sites and other treasures of culture in Iraq committed by the allied war planes in the ongoing aggression on Iraq.

Abdul Haq promised that the committee would shortly publish the names of all archaeological and cultural sites in Iraq which sustained minor or major damages due to the air raids.

Apartment cultural and archaeological centres, cities and villages, he said the allied forces have been bombing universities and other institutions of higher learning.

The civilisation of Mesopotamia, Abdul Haq said, was not the sole possession of Iraq, but rather of mankind as a whole and once the barbaric air attacks destroy these treasures they are lost for ever.

Abdul Haq, who is also vice-president of the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA) said that journalists and other intellectuals were called on to contribute towards an all-out effort to save the cultural heritage in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Jordan chapter of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) has issued a statement in Amman

expressing its total condemnation of the ongoing air raids on civilian targets describing them as outrageous massacres.

"These raids manifest a flagrant disregard on the part of the coalition arrayed against Iraq of all the international laws and

principles and the Fourth Geneva Convention which provides for the protection of civilians during war," said the organisation statement.

"AOHR wishes to draw attention of the world public opinion to the fact that the allied forces have far exceeded a mandate given them by the U.N. Security Council with their callous raids," the statement said.

AOHR, the statement added, considers the ongoing protests in various countries of the world, including the United States, against these barbaric actions as displaying the world's indignation and anger over the continuation of this devastating war.

The AOHR statement condemned the Egyptian government's stand with regard to this criminal war and denounced the Egyptian security authorities' harsh treatment of the Egyptian masses trying to express their denunciation of the war.

UNDRO Amman chief says U.N. may compensate families of air raid victims

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations offices operating in Jordan will give serious consideration to any request from the Jordanian government to compensate for the Jordanian families

Jordan Times

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Iraq won't surrender

THE KIND of unconditional and complete withdrawal that the allied countries are demanding of Iraq is tantamount to surrender. Iraq has not surrendered and has no intention of doing so. All that Baghdad has now proposed is to give U.N. Security Council Resolution 660 a chance for practical implementation by observing its spirit as well as its letter. True that resolution calls for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. But it is also true that its third operative paragraph calls for an immediate intensive negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait for the purpose of resolving their differences. If this operative paragraph is not a built-in condition for the full implementation of that resolution, one does not know what is. Additionally, any legal and political document as the one that found expression in Resolution 660 needs to be seen in proper perspective and with a sense of realism. One cannot for example have half a million Iraqi troops moved from Kuwait "immediately" in the strict sense of the word. Moving such a massive number of Iraqi soldiers out of Kuwait would necessarily require reasonable time and practical security arrangements. Otherwise Iraq would put its armed forces at the mercy of its enemies, numerous as they are and harbouring sinister motives and intentions as they do. The Iraqi ambassador to the U.N., Abdul Amir Abari, emphasised on Saturday in New York that the so-called Iraqi "conditions" associated with Baghdad's Friday stunning announcement that it accepts Resolution 660 are not actually "conditions" but rather "issues" that need to be discussed. This is the catch here. The government of Iraq is assuring the world especially the part of it that is willing to listen that there are really no conditions attached to Iraq's peace overture. Yet U.S. President George Bush and his inner circle of advisers who have developed a vested interest in pursuing the war option insist on seeing the thorns instead of smelling the flower. It is one thing for such officials to characterise Baghdad's acceptance of Resolution 660 as incomplete and quite another to label it as a "cruel hoax" and to add insult to injury by calling on the Iraqi people to topple their president and his government.

We hope there is still some sanity left in this world to enable Soviet leaders to build on Iraq's peace initiative, which they saw as a promising step in the peace campaign. If Moscow and Baghdad can establish a true momentum for peace there the warmongers would be stripped of any excuse to prosecute their lust for war and destruction. As things stand now, it appears as if the leaders of the Coalition Against Iraq (CAI) are hell bent on pressing with their war on the ground, regardless of what happens in Moscow. If this is indeed the case, there is only one thing left to be said: Iraq will defend itself and prove capable of repelling the aggression.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WITH THE Iraqi announcement that Baghdad is ready to implement U.N. Security Council resolution 660, no excuse is left for the allied forces to maintain their air bombardment of Iraqi civilian targets, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. Indeed, the Iraqi initiative provides very positive ideas for the West and essential elements for resolving not only the Gulf crisis, but also the Middle East Arab-Israeli conflict, the paper noted. Once the negotiations for peace are opened, all issues could be discussed for all formulas that would bring about the aspired peace and security for the Middle East, the paper added. But the paper said the American rejection of the Iraqi initiative stands out as a major obstacle for the U.N. Security Council to meet again and decide on the issue despite the fact that the continuation of the war is no more feasible now that the Iraqis have accepted resolution 660. Furthermore, President Bush has no right to decide to carry on the war since it is the right of the Security Council, which in the first place ruled in favour of war, to decide whether the hostilities should continue or not, said the paper. Neither Washington nor any other Western capital has the right to decide on matters of peace or war simply because the United Nations organisation is the sole party empowered to take such practice, the paper added. The time has come for the peace loving nations and organisations to intervene and seize the opportunity to end the conflict, the paper said. It said that peace, that would end the suffering of many people, should not be left in the hands of one person or a handful of persons because it benefits mankind.

We did not expect from Israel or its Western allies in general and the United States in particular to accept the Iraqi initiative because it means peace based on justice which they have adamantly refused so far, said Al Dostour Arabic daily Sunday. The paper said that the allied forces came to the Gulf not to liberate Kuwait as they claimed but to destroy Iraq's military might and economic and scientific infrastructure. Israel in particular is expected to encourage the United States to pursue its efforts to destroy Iraq in order to safeguard its own selfish interests and maintain its hold over Arab lands, the paper noted. What is surprising about the situation ensuing the Iraqi initiative, is to see Arab countries siding with Israel and the United States by expressing their rejection of the Iraqi initiative which not only expressed desire to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait, but is also designed to safeguard Arab countries' rights and those of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian lands, the paper pointed out. It said that it is unimaginable that Arab countries could adopt such a negative stand in a matter considered in favour of their own interests and siding by their enemies against their Arab brothers in Iraq instead. The paper said that the allied forces are competing with one another to kill Arab women and children in Iraq at a time when certain Arab countries aligned behind Washington continue to gloat over the suffering of their Arab brothers and sisters.

Weekly Political Pulse

By Dr. Waleed Saadi

The facts are missing from the Gulf war of information

IN retrospect, the entire Gulf crisis began with a massive barrage of disinformation. Starting with the collapse of the Jeddah meeting (held between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti sides under the direction of King Fahd on the eve of the Kuwaiti crisis) and the ensuing Arab efforts to defuse the collapsed Kuwaiti-Iraqi negotiations in the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, the whole scenario seems with the benefit of hindsight, to have been nothing but a vicious and well calculated campaign to frustrate all efforts for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and head instead directly to war.

Even if one wants to give credit to the other side's interpretation of the events that preceded Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the circumstances that followed it, there is still a body of facts that stand out openly and clearly in support of the thesis that a premeditated disinformation campaign has been waged all along by Washington and its allies in their effort to achieve the principal objectives in the Gulf region: One to destroy Iraq as a regional power, and the second to place the oil wealth of the Gulf region under the direct hegemony of Washington and London. The other parties that willy-nilly joined the contemporary "Sikes-Picot" design for the Middle East and Gulf region apparently did so to get a piece of the pie.

Even Moscow was caught by surprise and thought for a while that is too must toe Washington's line and either play the part designated for it or risk being kept out of the grand scheme and the spoils of war. There are now signs that the Soviet Union has finally woken up to the harsh realities of the game and is beginning to show signs of restlessness and unease. That there will be a belated

backlash in the Soviet Union is a foregone conclusion, but it will take time for Moscow to regroup and articulate a tenable reaction. Time, of course, is not on the side of Moscow which is bedevilled with a string of domestic woes most of which Moscow now believes are of Washington's making.

To get back to the disinformation campaign that was waged in particular by Washington right from the word go, it is fitting to recall the assurances and pledge by U.S. President George Bush that the U.S. deployment of forces in Saudi Arabia is simply and purely for the defence of Saudi Arabia with no designs or plans to start offensive hostilities. This part is most troubling for all peoples and nations of the world who still look to the U.S. as the only remaining superpower with political, economic, and military clout to establish a new international order on the heels of the end of the East-West rivalry.

For the U.S. president to make such a declaration for the whole world to hear and take a note of, only to be found as untrue, is simply preposterous. The strength and influence of Washington cannot be maintained on falsehoods, disinformation and deceit.

When the American chief executive makes a pledge or a commitment, the international community is entitled to place its trust and faith in any such declaration of policy. It is already an established history that President Bush never meant what he told his people and the nations of the world when he said that the U.S. deployment of armed forces was simply to defend Riyadh. The first sign that President Bush was not telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth came when he announced few weeks later

that he was beefing up the U.S. military presence in order to give them offensive capability.

Washington did not stop there but rather called on its allies as well to augment their military presence in order to also join the offensive effort of the so-called coalition forces.

The massive disinformation campaign continued after the start of the war in the Gulf. The extensive aerial and missile bombardment of Iraq was not confined as "pledged" to military targets, but also reached civilian targets — be they Iraqi, Kuwaiti or Jordanian.

The biggest tragedy of all is that the immediate audience of President Bush, the American people, are not being told the facts about the entire Gulf conflict from its inception to its present state of affairs. Of course the only hope to amend Bush's policy on the Kuwaiti situation is to have the American people hear the whole truth. As long as they are denied an opportunity to get familiar with even the basics about the crisis there, will be no chance whatsoever that they will ever tell their government enough is enough.

Bush's era can thus be characterised as an era unprecedented in censorship of news and manipulation of information. Perhaps the president's background as the director of the CIA would explain in part his tendency to direct the news media in a way that serves best his line of policy. Meanwhile, the American people get the blame for the present course in Washington, and the entire country gets chastised for the wrong-doing of the few who happen to be at the helm now in Washington.

'Death by briefing' of the media in Saudi Arabia

By George Esper
The Associated Press

DHAHRAN — After a month of war, with ground combat approaching, the U.S. military has severely curtailed access by reporters to soldiers and the front lines.

As a sideshow, there is the endless skirmish between military public relations officers and more than 800 journalists who seek front-row seats at the United States' largest battle since Vietnam.

"Death by briefing," said a frustrated reporter who had been exhausted, not by a trip into the field, but by the marathon of note-taking and tape recording at sessions with official spokesmen.

The command says it will increase access to the troops. All journalists would be in escorted pools, however, and would total fewer than half the 500 reporters and photographers who roamed Vietnam almost unrestricted.

Military officials argue that the movements of journalists must be limited to protect them as well as the allied war effort.

Some existing pools have not been activated and no journalist is allowed to interview a GI without a military escort. Some soldiers who spoke with unaccompanied reporters have been reprimanded.

Some, including Fred Bayles and John King of the Associated Press, were detained for their efforts. Their names were given to the Saudi government, along with those of other correspondents who went into the field without military escorts.

The U.S. command said no marines were engaged in the battle, but they were, as was discovered by reporters who made their own ways to Khafji at great risk.

Some air force pools have fared relatively well, including one that covered the opening night of the war. After that, pool coverage went down hill and journalists were not taken to the only major ground fighting thus far, at Khafji on Jan. 27.

The U.S. command said no marines were engaged in the battle, but they were, as was discovered by reporters who made their own ways to Khafji at great risk.

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In the view of some military officials and the U.S. Defence Department, the press somehow lost the war in Vietnam by portraying its horrors in pictures and words, thus undermining public support.

The American military got:

"This image of the press as an uncontrolled enemy," said Tony Clifton, a Newsweek correspondent who has covered wars for 20 years.

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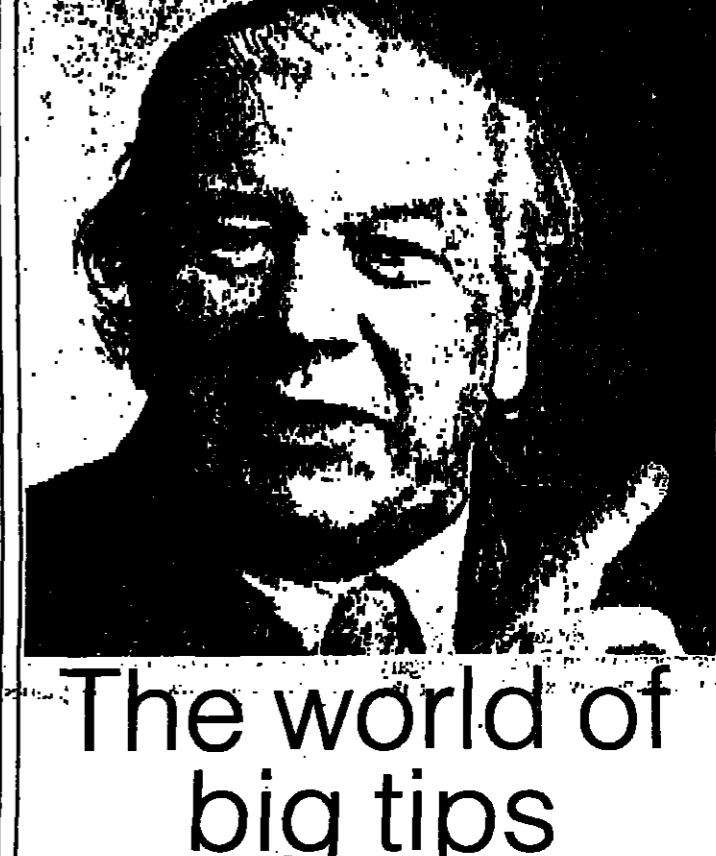
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The world of big tips

By Peter Ustinov

The following are major excerpts from a column the author contributed to the Feb. 15-17 issue of the European. Mr. Ustinov is a prominent actor, TV personality and UNICEF ambassador at large.

I NEVER thought I would live to hear U.S. Secretary of State James Baker say that King Hussein of Jordan had changed sides. To make such an allegation is not to know the King, a privilege I have had for the best part of half a century. I was much less surprised to hear that the generous American grant to Jordan was being reconsidered as a punishment for a speech which seemed impudent, less surprised, because we live in the world the big ripper, with sudden withdrawal of favour regularly used to censure the expression of unpopular opinion.

Remember, if you will, the declaration of the Yemeni chairman of the Security Council, who dared to cast his vote against the motion condemning Iraq for the invasion of Kuwait. He said that his vote was a question of conscience, admitting that his gesture would no doubt mean the withdrawal of \$70 million in American aid. The Egyptian debt for military hardware from the United States was wiped out as a gesture of gratitude for Egypt's willingness to be actively involved in the Gulf war. We can only guess at the deals with Syria and other countries, notably Israel, along the same lines.

Once governments behave in a manner which would entail instant arrest in individuals, and once the graceful term of enlightened self-interest is employed to justify the atmosphere of understated venality prevalent today, it strains credulity to accept President Bush's definition of the present conflict as one of good versus evil. That is strictly for the young of mind. Mark you, nothing that Mr. Bush can say can make Saddam Hussein's image less attractive than it already is, although it is absolutely possible that such a man may exert a certain charm on those who actually know him.

To allege that good is the exclusive platform of the coalition is, far-fetched and even in doubtful taste. The massive and constant air attacks on military targets obviously make a great deal of strategic sense, even if they sicken the sensibilities of those who remember Dresden, and even London during the Blitz. And the promise to reconstruct Iraq when it is all over is but a premonition of guilty conscience in those about to indulge in slaughter.

Mr. De Klerk, in his historic speech to the South African parliament, equated the end of apartheid with the end of South Africa, an item worthy of record. At the same time, the sanctions against South Africa were not for a moment as watertight as those against Iraq.

Adjoining countries depending on trade with South Africa were spared from joining in, a form of fundamental understanding never extended to Jordan. Who can ever know whether the sanctions against Iraq might be redundant? No one. All we know is that weapons work a treat, and I suppose that is some kind of relief. And what will happen when the scenario, eagerly written by so many contributors, and controlled by so few, is finally at an end?

The great peace conference, the return of goodwill and golden handshakes for the deserving, the Palestinians represented the American War of Independence, deciding to negotiate with the colonists on condition that their delegate was Benedict Arnold. The conflict may really only begin at the peace conference, even though the war is behind us. But meanwhile, let us applaud Jordan, as though it were her responsibility.

And let us wonder why the United States should have allowed the pique with the most liberal spirit in the region, who is merely immunity

Aziz's Moscow visit shapes up as last chance to avert ground war

By Nicholas Phythian
Reuter

NICOSIA — Iraq's foreign minister, Tareq Aziz, was expected in Moscow Sunday for a visit that looks more and more like a last chance to avert a bloody ground battle for Kuwait.

The Soviet Union, like Iran, has been trying to persuade Iraq to withdraw peacefully.

Moscow has welcomed Iraq's ceasefire initiative as "an important beginning" and has made much of the fact that the Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) spoke of withdrawal from Kuwait.

"But Soviet spokesman have expressed reservations about the conditions, which include an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories."

"Unfortunately, this principled provision (withdrawal) is linked to many conditions, which could render it meaningless," Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin said.

Iraq's U.N. ambassador called Saturday for negotiations on the basis of Baghdad's offer and said some members of the coalition opposed to the occupation of Kuwait were "more sincere than the others in trying to find a peaceful solution."

"For example, the Soviet Union is more interested in genuinely trying to find a peaceful solution," he added.

Iraq, which fought Iran from 1980 to 1988 but has remained neutral in the latest Gulf war Saturday urged the United States and its allies to react positively to Baghdad's offer.

The Supreme National Security Council, chaired by President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani,

urged them "to take reciprocal positive steps and thus prepare the ground for a peaceful and rapid settlement of the hostilities."

But Iraq accuses allied planes of attacking civilians.

It says in one incident on Wednesday more than 300 people were killed in an air strike on a Baghdad shelter. In another, it said 130 civilians were killed when bombs missed a bridge during a raid on Fallouja, west of the capital.

The U.S. Defence Department, which claims the shelter was a military communications centre, accused Iraq of deliberately damaging at least one building for "propaganda" purposes but declined to produce any immediate evidence.

"They are faking some of it," Rear Admiral Mike McConnell told a news briefing. "We saw them inflict some damage on a specific building."

Two Iraqi Scud missiles hit Israel Saturday night and the army said one landed in the south for the first time. An army spokesman said there were no reports of casualties or damage.

Morocco, which sent troops to the Gulf to defend Saudi Arabia but has seen widespread popular support for Iraq at home, became the first member of the allied coalition to welcome Iraq's ceasefire offer.

But the eight other Arab members of the coalition, meeting in Cairo, omitted any mention of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) from a statement on the future of

China tries to put Tiananmen behind it, but success difficult

By David Schlesinger
Reuter

BEIJING — China's leaders are trying to put the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1989 behind them by jailing two alleged masterminds — called "black hands" — for 13 years, bringing to an end trials of well-known dissidents.

However, diplomats in Beijing said the traditional Chinese practice of punishing scapegoats to quell unrest, summed up in proverbs like "kill a chicken to warn the monkey," and "execute one to scare 100," may not work for long.

"There is still so much anger and hurt below the surface, and the dissatisfaction about Communist Party rule that resulted in Tiananmen (square demonstrations) is still there," a senior diplomat said.

"The millions of people who took to the streets did so naturally and spontaneously. To try to put the blame on two people is ludicrous."

Beijing's people's intermediate court last week jailed Chen Ziming and Wang Jiaotao for 13 years on charges of inciting to subvert the government and the socialist system.

An internal speech by Premier Li Peng labelled Wang, 32, and Chen 37, "the black hands behind the black hands" plotting the pro-democracy movement, according to Chinese sources and the human rights group Asia Watch.

The speech, which has not been published in the official press, reportedly said the two veteran pro-democracy campaigners had to be crushed or the communist government would know no peace.

NEWS ANALYSIS

A third dissident, Liu Gang, was sentenced to six years. Chen Xiaoping, a 29-year-old constitutional law scholar, was found guilty but was exempted from punishment because he surrendered voluntarily to authorities and showed remorse.

Including last week's announcement, 21 guilty verdicts on dissidents involved in the 1989 unrest have been reported in the official media, resulting in 15 prison sentences.

Diplomats said they did not expect further trials of prominent

dissidents arrested in the crackdown on dissent that began on June 4, 1989, when army tanks and guns crushed the pro-democracy movement and inflicted a heavy loss of life.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Turville said the sentences were deeply troubling.

"No prison sentence imposed for nonviolent political activity can be considered lenient," she told reporters.

Diplomats in Beijing said they thought the 1989 democracy movement and the harsh and bloody government repression that followed would not be forgotten either by the world community or by the Chinese population.

These were clearly political trials and these people are political prisoners," a diplomat said.

The Chinese government has said repeatedly the trials were legal and carried out according to established procedures. It has rejected attempts by Western reporters and diplomats to attend, saying the proceedings were purely an internal affair.

"The world will not forget it and the people will not forget it. The Chinese people remember

massacres very vividly and with great anger," the diplomat said.

"The communist leadership knows that, because it came to power on the back of just that kind of anger. At some point down the road, when conditions are right, that anger will spill over again and either sweep the present leadership away or cause absolutely massive reform," he said.

Most diplomats agreed that economic stability was now key to the present leadership remaining in power, and that mass demonstrations were unlikely soon unless growth slowed and inflation soared again.

The 1989 demonstration was preceded by a bout of inflation when his 30 per cent in cities. Inflation was brought down to two per cent last year.

Diplomats pointed out that harsh sentences on previous dissidents, like the 15-year sentence handed Wei Jingheng in 1979, had not crushed the pro-democracy spirit, however.

"They are trying to put Tiananmen behind them, but giving 13 years does not do that," a diplomat said.

"What they have done is just put it ahead of them."

Turkish plan to ease Kurdish ban faces stiff opposition

By Ayse Sarigul
Reuter

ANKARA — A Turkish government plan to let an estimated 10 million Kurds speak their mother tongue without breaking the law has run into stiff opposition.

The reform, seen by western diplomats as an attempt to polish up Turkey's human rights image, has antagonised many nationalist Turks.

They fear that lifting the ban, imposed in 1983 to help curb political violence, will fuel Kurdish aspirations for autonomy or independence.

Parliamentary sources say that the ruling centre-right Motherland Party, despite its absolute parliamentary majority, may fail to push the reform through the assembly quickly, partly because of resistance within its own ranks.

"We must tread very carefully. People in other regions fear this move could lead to separatism," Motherland Deputy Chairman Metin Gurderd told Reuters.

A draft bill, sent to parliament last month by the government, proposes allowing the Kurds, concentrated in 13 southeastern provinces, to speak — but not write — their language.

So sensitive is the issue that the draft bill, even though it would merely legalise current practice, does not even mention the word Kurdish.

It asserts that Turkish is the country's sole official language, but says other languages and dialects may be used in speech and music.

"I can say there is quite a large number of opponents (in the Motherland) to the Kurdish bill," said Motherland Deputy Alpaslan Pehlivanli, who heads the commission.

They fear that lifting the ban, imposed in 1983 to help curb political violence, will fuel Kurdish aspirations for autonomy or independence.

The agenda of parliament's judiciary commission is full. The debate on this bill may be delayed for weeks.

The outlawed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) has led a violent independence campaign which has cost more than 2,600 lives in the southeast since 1984.

The PKK, which has attracted minimal world attention with its campaign, says the region is part of an ancient Kurdish homeland covering parts of present-day Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Turkey, which borders all three countries, has sworn to prevent the emergence of any independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq after the Gulf war.

Western diplomats say President Turgut Ozal wants the language reform now to polish Turkey's image and improve its influence on any post-war changes to the status of Kurds in Iraq.

The government has, at the same time, said it would cancel three penal code articles which ban political action by communists and Muslim fundamentalists.

Turkey's human rights record has often come under fire from the West.

Its treatment of the Kurds, reports of police torture and repressive aspects of its penal code have been cited as obstacles to its bid for full European Community membership.

Turkey has signed several human rights conventions, including those at the 1990 Paris Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which lay down stringent international standards.

Kurds in Turkey are not recognised as an ethnic minority, unlike Greeks and Armenians, who have their own schools, churches and newspapers in their own languages.

Strict anti-separatist laws punish any attempt to assert an ethnic or national Kurdish identity.

Motherland Deputy Nurettin

Yilmaz, a Kurd, infuriated his conservative colleagues last week by saying Kurds were settled in Anatolia before Turks arrived in the 11th century.

State Minister Mustafa Tasar said Mr. Yilmaz had fuelled antagonism to the Kurdish reform among Motherland deputies.

"I support the bill, but it is wrong for Kurds to say 'we are different' when we are talking of equality for all citizens. Separatism will harm its supporters," he said.

The Kurdish ban was enacted in 1983 by a military government which took power in a 1980 coup to curb political violence.

The reform will enable Kurds to speak Kurdish and listen to Kurdish music but the language will remain banned from official documents, education, publications, the media and rallies.

"The bill will be passed finally but it will be difficult," said Motherland Deputy Resit Celik, a Kurd.

Ugur Mumcu, a columnist for the left-leaning Cumhuriyet daily, took a more cynical view.

"It will serve no purpose except make money for Kurdish singers whose cassettes will sell like hot cakes."

four enemy warplanes were shot down, but did not give their nationality.

Bahdad was buffeted by heavy rain and a sand storm, impairing visibility to such an extent that air raids may have been postponed.

Soldiers on leave arriving in the capital from the war zone reported allied air strikes on the highway linking Kuwait City with the southern Iraqi port city of Basra.

IRNA reported intensive allied bombings raids early Sunday on Basra and other southern Iraqi cities. It said the explosions shook windowpanes in Khorramshahr in southwestern Iran, 40 kilometres east of Basra.

A U.S. spokesman said the allied air forces had flown 2,600 missions in the last 24 hours, bringing to 78,000 the total of sorties flown since the war began on Jan. 17.

No allied or Iraqi aircraft had been shot down in the last day.

The Gulf allies had flown 150 missions to attack Iraqi Scud missile launcher sites, he said.

The Defence Department announced the deaths of three U.S. soldiers in the Gulf from medical reasons or accidents, bringing the total of war-related deaths to 48.

It said Sergeant Lawrence Welch, 41, died of heart failure and Sergeant Jeffrey Rollins, 23, and first sergeant Henry Sanders, 42, were killed in separate vehicle accidents.

Since the Gulf war began on Jan. 17, 12 U.S. soldiers were killed in action and 36 died in non-combat situations.

Oil slick

(Continued from page 1)

blocking the oil like a natural boom but authorities say wind and currents will eventually bring the slick around, taking it further down the Arabian Peninsula.

The 200 million gallon per day desalination plant at Jubail supplies the Saudi capital with three-quarters of its drinking water.

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East knocks at NATO door — but will it open?

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

BRUSSELS — The nations of Eastern Europe, once NATO's sworn enemies, are pressing the Western alliance to shelter them from the threat of unrest and their increasingly troubled Soviet neighbour.

Their old organisations for military and trade affairs — the Warsaw Pact and Comecon — are dead and about to be buried.

NATO, while keen to forge new links with the fragile young democracies in Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia, has shut the door firmly on admitting new members and is deeply ambiguous about what else it might do to help those now out in the cold.

"This is one of the most sensitive subjects that we have to deal with," a senior NATO official said recently.

"They see us as a force for stability in Europe, perhaps the only one," said an alliance diplomat. "But what we can do for them is limited."

NATO has no role to play in helping rebuild the shattered economies of Eastern Europe — the Europe Community and others take care of that — though it has thrown open its doors to former enemies and offered regular diplomatic contacts.

NATO is anxious to reassure these countries about the future, partly because it wants to see stability established across the continent and partly to prove that the alliance is not just a cold war dinosaur that should be left to die.

But formal security guarantees to countries such as Poland or Romania are out of the question.

Woerner, speaking after Mr. Nastase's visit, said NATO had no formal mechanisms for association with third countries and added: "We will reach solutions satisfactory to all sides."

One solution to the problem, some NATO diplomats say, would be to give these countries the feeling that they can count on the alliance for support in an informal way.

"Through the contacts we have now established, we can create uncertainty in people's minds about whether NATO might jump in to protect them," said one diplomat. "That in itself might be a deterrent to any aggressive action. The Soviets, for example, could never be quite sure how we would react."

The alliance is not only worried about the effects of instability in the Soviet Union, which still has huge conventional forces and thousands of nuclear weapons despite arms control agreements.

Nationalist and ethnic tensions — between, for example, Romania and Hungary — were suppressed during the cold war but are now resurfacing. In addition, there is the worry that economic problems could cause serious unrest in the region.

The 34-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has gained new strength since the end of the cold war, but NATO diplomats say many Eastern European nations do not think it is strong enough to give them real security.

"CSCE works by consensus and that means than any one country can block any attempt to deal with problems," said one diplomat.

During the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli army had to call in numerous air

Battle for Kuwait could rival some of Beirut's worst

By Claude Salkani
Reuter

AMMAN — A battle to drive Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait City could bring about fierce house-to-house fighting, rivaling some of the worst conflicts in the Lebanese capital Beirut.

Officials of the Kuwaiti toppled government say Iraqi forces are turning Kuwait's apartment blocks into formidable bunkers reinforced with concrete as defensive positions against an allied onslaught.

The battle for Kuwait could turn out to be longer and more costly than military planners in the U.S.-led anti-Iraq coalition hope.

Beirut and Kuwait City have many similarities. Both cities boast new high-rise apartments, strongly built to withstand the harsh sand and salt air blowing off the sea.

Kuwait's luxurious apartments could offer excellent defensive positions against small arms fire and even light artillery.

Fifteen years of civil war in Beirut have shown how much punishment a modern building can withstand unless massive bombardment is used against it.

The question is: Will the allies use heavy weaponry that could kill Kuwaiti civilians and devastate the city in driving out the Iraqis?

During the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli army had to call in numerous air

strikes, often leveling entire buildings, killing civilians and combatants alike.

The Israelis, like the United States and its allies, faced political constraints at home that meant keeping losses to a minimum.

During the civil war, street fighting in Beirut often ended in stalemate, with militia fighting for months over a street, a building or even a single floor.

... Weapons: the allies can throw at the Iraqis are more sophisticated than those used by Lebanon's warring militias, but can these weapons be used without endangering civilians caught in the crossfire?

To use the U.S. military euphemism for civilian casualties: How much "collateral damage" can be sustained?

Even in Lebanon, the various militias and armies used tanks, mortars and field artillery on Beiruit.

Casualties among the civilian population were often greater than those suffered by combatants.

U.S. military planners believe one option is to besiege Kuwait City to force an Iraqi surrender. Israel's siege of Beirut in August 1982 was in all practical terms a medieval one, yet supplies still filtered through.

"Sieges have a very limited effect and have never really worked. The allies would have an enormous problem," said a Western military expert in the area.

Aziz
(Continued from page 1)

Secretary of State James Baker. President George Bush, vacationing in Kennebunkport, Maine, told reporters: "We are determined to finish this job and do it right."

Mr. Bush said he did not know what would come of the talks, but he said Mr. Gorbachev was "trying very hard to seek an end to this conflict."

"He knows very well that the objectives spelled out by the United Nations... must be met in their entirety," Mr. Bush said.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said the only thing that could slow the allied military campaign was the start of an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait.

"The only thing we can really believe is action," Mr. Cheney said on ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley." "We have to see him withdraw from Kuwait."

"We have a certain tempo to our military operations now and... we're not going to break that tempo unless it is clear that he is complying with the (U.N.) Security Council directive," said Mr. Bush's National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft.

Mr. Baker, interviewed on CNN's "Newsmaker Sunday," said the Soviets were welcome to seek a diplomatic solution, but he expressed no optimism they would succeed.

"There is nothing to be lost by talking... and if that will result in the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, more power to whoever is doing the talking," Mr. Baker said. "... It remains to be seen, of course, whether anything can come of this session."

Mr. Baker added that even if an Iraqi withdrawal did follow the talks, "It's just not going to be because someone has been talking to the Iraqis. It's going to be because the coalition forces are doing what we have said for some time we would do" to force them out of Kuwait.

Egyptian Foreign Minister

Ricardo

Amman's exclusive gift shop
Italian shoes, leather goods,
perfumes, lighters, watches,
pens, silverware, porcelain,
crystalware etc.

Edberg takes no. 1 spot despite semifinal defeat in Brussels

BRUSSELS (R) — Boris Becker ceded his world number one spot to Stefan Edberg Saturday after retiring hurt in the semifinals of the Belgian Indoor Tennis Tournament.

But Edberg, the second seed, had little cause to celebrate. He was upset by fourth-seeded Frenchman Guy Forget 3-6, 6-0, 6-3 in the other semifinal.

"Edberg will be the new number one Monday," said Richard Evans, ATP's director of communications.

The new rankings will show Edberg 17 points ahead of Becker, who led the Swede by 133 points before the Brussels tournament.

Becker, facing world number 25 Andrei Cherkasov of the

Soviet Union, played his best tennis of the week as he took the first set 6-2.

But after losing his service in the second game of the second set, things began to go wrong.

After losing the next game, Becker examined his right thigh during the changeover. His play became increasingly ragged and he checked his thigh again at the next break.

The German, normally one of the fastest movers on the court, repeatedly struggled to reach Cherkasov's groundstrokes or simply did not react at all when the 20-year-old Soviet aimed for the sidelines.

Becker surrendered the set to Cherkasov by hitting a low volley

into the net and retired early in the final set after twice struggling to hold serve. Cherkasov won 2-6, 6-3, 2-2.

"I already said I knew before the tournament there was a good chance that after this week I would be number two," Becker said.

"I hope my leg is not too badly hurt. My leg concerns me the most."

Becker laid the blame for his leg problem on the ATP Tour.

"I think that's the fault we have with this new tour. You have to play almost every week," he said. "I have to play 18 or 19 tournaments in order to stay on top and that is too much."

Edberg also saw his game go

downhill after winning the first set 6-4 against Forget.

Forget fine-tuned his powerful service and broke Edberg three times in a row to take the second set.

The Frenchman, who possesses the fastest service of the whole field here, kept the momentum going and inflicted a decisive mental blow to Edberg when he broke the Swede in the second game of the final set.

Forget, number 11 in the world, broke again in the eighth game and converted his second matchpoint with a volley past a helpless Edberg.

"He will be an interesting guy to follow in the next months," Edberg said of the Frenchman.

'Gazza' scores twice to get Spurs out of trouble

LONDON (R) — Tottenham's irrepressible international midfielder Paul Gascoigne showed why he is such an asset to the troubled English soccer club.

He scored two goals for the second time in successive F.A. Cup ties and earned the hard-up London side a lucrative quarter-final berth.

The 23-year-old England player struck the winning goal six minutes from the time as Tottenham beat Portsmouth 2-1 after they had trailed the second division stragglers for 20 minutes.

Three weeks ago he scored twice and set up two more goals in Spurs' 4-2 win over Oxford in the fourth round.

He is Tottenham's leading goalscorer with 17 this season, joint third highest among first division marksmen, and has three more than England striker and team mate Gary Lineker. Last season he scored only six.

Manager Terry Venables said: "Gascoigne scored two exceptional goals," adding with understatement: "I thought he had a good game."

Portsmouth manager Frank Burrows was full of praise for the player known to the nation's soccer fans simply as "Gazza".

"He is a super player. His

ability, and that of one or two others, was a telling factor today. That's why people pay loads of money for them."

Italian club Juventus were reportedly prepared to pay £7 million (\$13.7 million) for Gascoigne on the strength of his performances at last year's World Cup final.

Tottenham may yet have to part with him and Lineker to pay off their crippling debts of more than £12 million (\$23.6 million).

But the club, who have not won a trophy since their two F.A. Cup triumphs in 1982 and 1983, are desperate to keep their two prize assets.

They are equally desperate for the glamour and money a Wembley Cup Final would bring after having slipped to sixth in the league and been knocked out of the League Cup in the quarter-finals.

Their success Saturday was offset by crowd trouble and defender Terri Fenwick breaking his ankle during the warm-up.

Fenwick, just back in the side after a year's absence with a broken leg, landed awkwardly

while jumping.

About 100 rival fans spilled

over on to the pitch and exchanged blows after Gascoigne

Manager George Graham said: "That performance was more like us of old. We got in there and competed among a minefield of tackles in midfield. It was a real battle of the giants."

Another goal-scoring hero was transfer-listed Gary Lund who stepped out of the shadows with a last minute winner for second division Notts County against Manchester City.

Lund, only in the side because first choice David Regis was cup tied, earned County a quarter-final place for the first time since 1984.

They were joined in the last eight by second division leaders West Ham and Cambridge of the third division, who thrashed League Cup semifinalists Sheffield Wednesday 4-0.

Substitute Jimmy Quinn scored a 77th minute winner to steer West Ham into the last eight against Crewe less than four minutes after coming on.

Dion Dublin scored twice for Cambridge, who set a club record of 15 matches without defeat with their ninth successive victory.

Manchester United visit Norwich Monday, while on the same night Nottingham Forest play Newcastle in a fourth round replay.



Paul Gascoigne scored his second goal and the match was delayed two minutes after police reinforcements restored order.

Arsenal's England defender Lee Dixon turned from villain to hero when he scored their winning goal in a 2-1 victory over Leeds in the marathon fourth round.

Dixon, who missed a penalty in Wednesday's second replay, scored Arsenal's second goal in the 43rd minute to set up a fifth round tie at third division Shrewsbury.

Horoscope not received

THE BETTER HALF

By Harry Quinn

HARRIS 2-13



"I let Stanley leave the house without me — but I keep him on a leash!"

JUMBLE

Uncramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ESTAC

RODUG

WHYTOR

JURNIY

THE MAGICIAN'S TRICKS WERE SOMETHING ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer to JUMBLE

Yesterday's Jumble: BILGE ASSAY IMPAIR POULE

Answer: What are the chances of most of them getting slim? —SLIM

THE Daily Crossword

by James Barrick

ACROSS

1 Drop heavily

2 A Olympian

3 Domino

4 Ratten worker

5 Vocalist's offering

6 Blue flag

7 Moldings

8 Auditorium

9 Auditorium

10 Fabrics

11 Plamire

12 Calendar span

13 Plant part

14 Bugle call

15 Skating

16 Lennon's widow

17 Writer Cather

18 — de vive

19 like a jeweller

20 Enticement

21 Character

22 Use a bookie

23 Tolled

24 Vocalist's offering

25 Lengths: abbr.

26 Double curve

27 Piece of rest

28 Squash

29 Tel:

30 Delayer's word

31 Male animal

32 Occupation

33 — (native)

34 Linden or Holbrook

35 Persons

36 Declare invalid

37 Coconut meat

38 Piece of land

39 — mudi

40 Moves a certain way

41 Agreement

42 Fungus

43 — wicked

44 Connection

45 Wattle

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Bulgaria seeks foreign capital for new airport

SOFIA (R) — Bulgaria is seeking foreign capital to build a new international airport as part of plans to overhaul its transport and communications sectors, Transport Minister Veselin Pavlov has said.

Pavlov said that Bulgaria, emerging from four decades of communist central planning, wants to improve air, road and rail links and lay optical fibre communications systems.

All these major projects would be carried out without burdening the state budget, he said.

Bulgaria believes the new airport, to be built on the site of the existing one, has great potential because the country's geographical position makes it a natural gateway for the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

"We are planning this airport completely with foreign capital. We envisage selling the rights to operate the airport to the company which will build it and, after

the company has repaid its investment and a certain profit, it will turn it over to this country," Pavlov said in an interview.

Bulgaria has received around 80 proposals from different companies proposing investments ranging between \$350 million and \$800 million. Officials said about six of these proposals were being treated seriously.

The government hopes to issue the terms for a competition soon, and receive final bids in four months, allowing the government to announce the winner by the end of June.

Another major construction project is a highway from Kalotina on the Yugoslav border to Svilengrad on the Turkish border.

"We shall proceed in the same way as with the airport. The highway will be operated by the company that builds it," Pavlov said.

Sri Lanka seeks \$500m IMF loan

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka is seeking a loan of up to \$500 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this year to help offset a shortfall of foreign exchange caused by the Gulf war, a senior government economist has said.

"We are losing between \$100 and \$150 million a year by way of falling remittances from expatriate workers," the economist, who declined to be named, said in an interview.

More than 70,000 Sri Lankan workers have returned from Kuwait since Iraq invaded oil-rich Kuwait last August. A further 400,000 Sri Lankans are still in the Middle East.

Colombo has already drawn the entire \$180 million it was allocated under an IMF structural adjustment facility from October 1989 to October 1991, the economist said.

But under an enhanced structural adjustment facility a maximum of \$500 million can be obtained, disbursed over three years, he said.

"The conditions are tougher than the normal facility and IMF

officials would regularly monitor the progress of Sri Lanka's economy. But we need the loan," the economist said.

Under the structural adjustment facility, the IMF monitored the loan and requested reports from Colombo every three to six months.

The report on overall sales came a day after the department said sales on the retail level continued to fall in January. The 0.9 per cent decline followed a 1.5 per cent drop in December for the first back-to-back decreases in seven months.

Retail sales, which were flat in November, haven't risen since a barely perceptible 0.9 per cent advance in October.

However, the report also had a touch of good news. It said business inventories in December dropped 0.7 per cent, to a seasonally adjusted \$810.7 billion after advancing 0.2 per cent in November and 0.1 per cent in October.

In past recessions, big piles of goods on shelves and backlogs caused growing production cut-back and job layoffs as businesses struggled to sell off their backlog.

The activity pushed the ratio of inventories-to-sales to 1.53 from 1.5 in November. The ratio means it would take 1.53 months to exhaust the backlog at the December sales pace. It stood at 1.5 in November and 1.18 in October.

The ratio jumped to 1.71 during the 1981-82 recession and to 1.75 in the 1971-75 downturn, and analysts noted that businesses are using new techniques to keep backlog lean and

Soviet price reform to include lower taxes and higher wages

MOSCOW (R) — The Soviet Union will compensate citizens for a planned increase in retail prices by raising salaries and benefits and cutting taxes on business, a senior government official has said.

Vladimir Shcherbakov, chairman of the State Committee on Labour, told the Communist Party daily Pravda that taxes on enterprises' profits would be cut from 45 per cent to 35 per cent.

Workers' wages will rise by an average of 60 roubles (about \$35 at the commercial rate) per month, Shcherbakov said. The average Soviet salary is now 250 roubles (\$150) a month.

There has been no official confirmation of the prices or how and when they would be imposed.

But the chairman of the State Committee on Prices told Pravda Friday the central government would implement the price changes in cooperation with the Federation Council — a top executive body including President Mikhail Gorbachev and the heads of the 15 constituent republics.

Vyacheslav Sennachov said central government would set ceilings for prices on meat, milk, eggs, vegetable oil, sugar, bread, shoes, linen, underwear and most children's items. Republics would have a right to set prices below the ceilings.

News that the central government planned to institute steep increases in retail prices was reported last week in the daily newspaper Izvestia.

Prices in the heavily subsidised food sector have been kept artificially low for decades, leading to extreme wastage.

Izvestia said the changes would include a tripling of bread and meat prices and increases of 130 per cent for milk and fish, 135 per cent for sugar, 240 per cent for salt and 100 per cent for tea, butter, cooking oil and cigarettes.

"We will not accept the government's denationalisation plans which have not been ratified by the parliament," said Junedi.

Junedi estimated that about 350,000 workers in state-run enterprises in Karachi took part in the strike. The protest action was restricted to Karachi, the country's largest city and its most important financial and industrial centre.

Pakistan's powerful trade unions have been the strongest critics of Sharif's plans to sell off shares in most government-run enterprises and industries, ranging from banking and insurance to textiles and cement.

The unions have predicted that as many as 150,000 jobs will be lost in the first year of Sharif's sweeping privatisation programme.

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Sharif, a self-made millionaire and

More hurdles ahead on Pretoria road to reforms

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Hurdles on the road to substantive talk about post-apartheid South Africa were only half-cleared by a new agreement between the government and the African National Congress (ANC), both sides said Sunday.

The ANC agreed to curb the activities of its armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), and the government promised to rein in security forces and accelerate the release of political prisoners in the accord announced last Friday.

Both the ANC and the government had hoped for a breakthrough agreement that would revive faltering progress towards negotiations on establishment of non-racial democracy. But "there are conflicting interpretations ... on both sides," a senior government source said.

ANC information director Pallo Jordan added: "We would not say the agreement clears the way for full-scale political negotiations because the question of political prisoners and the return of political exiles has not been dealt with extensively."

The two sides give different estimates of the number of political prisoners likely to be freed by April 30, the ANC's deadline for their release.

The ANC talks of 3,500 prisoners, but Justice Minister Kobie Coetse says there are fewer than 1,000.

Some British royals are shirkers — poll

LONDON (AP) — The Sunday Times, which has castigated members of Britain's royal family for not doing enough for the country's war effort, said a poll shows nearly 63 per cent who have a view on the subject agree.

The royal family, apart from the queen and the prince and princess of Wales (her eldest son and daughter-in-law), is not doing enough for the war effort," the newspaper said in its Sunday edition.

"That is the view of almost six in 10 British adults with an opinion on the subject."

A Sunday Times editorial last week accused some young members of the queen's family of

displaying "upper class decadence and insensitivity" while,

It singled out the duke of York, the queen's second son, for playing golf in Spain on a break from the war effort, and the Mediterranean and criticised his wife, Sarah, of partying in London.

Other newspapers said later Prince Edward, the queen's third son, should put his theatrical talents to use by entertaining the troops.

In related question on the National Opinion Polls (NOP) survey, commissioned by the Sunday Times, 42 per cent agreed that some royals "are engaging in activities which are inappropriate during a period when the country is at war."

Japan's worst nuclear plant mishap raises fears

MIHAMA, Japan (AP) — Makio Tashiro, seated behind the counter of his clock shop, quietly told how an accident at the nearby nuclear power plant had revived his worst nightmares of a reactor meltdown.

Plant and government officials say the accident on Feb. 9 at the plant nine kilometres from the shop was by no means a meltdown.

They say an emergency shutdown was ordered because abnormal radiation levels were detected in a reactor when radioactive water leaked from one cooling system to another after a steam generator tube cracked.

Tashiro, 39, has been assured only a small amount of radiation leaked into the atmosphere and poses no health risk. Still, he has considered moving away from the plant, which stands near the white sand beaches of central Japan's western shore.

"It's too late by the time there's a disaster that sets off a high reading," he said.

What is being called Japan's worst nuclear accident — the first to set off a reactor core's emergency cooling system — has raised new questions about the government's ambitious programme to expand its atomic energy programme.

Critics noted that it followed a mandatory annual safety check by only a few months.

Anti-nuclear activists have said the tube suspected of causing the accident is prone to wear and is the weak point in the design of 17 of Japan's 40 nuclear power plants.

Anti-nuclear groups and some government officials believe the accident will increase fears about nuclear dangers, which could have profound implications for a resource-poor nation that must import virtually all its oil.

"It is inevitable that public concern about the safety of nuclear power will increase as a result of the accident," said Hiroshi Matsuo, chief of the government's Office of Atomic Energy Policy Research.

Nuclear power accounts for 26.6 per cent of Japan's electricity and the government plans to double the number of plants to provide 43 per cent by 2010.

Jinzburo Takagi of the

South Africa's year-old peace process ran into trouble over interpretation of the ANC's agreement last August to suspend its anti-apartheid guerrilla and "related activities," and over the government's slowness to release political prisoners.

While the ANC said the agreement meant the government had accepted the ANC's right to use force to repel attacks during factional fighting, Vlok denied there had been agreement on the ANC's proposed self-defence units.

"I do not want any organisation to have self-defence units ...," he said.

Meanwhile a nine-nation commonwealth committee has decided to retain all sanctions against South Africa, although it suggested sports boycott might be eased later this year.

The ANC agreed not to infiltrate men or arms into South Africa. It also undertook not to train guerrillas within the country, incite violence or threaten to race classification.

The special meeting Saturday followed an announcement on Feb. 5 by De Klerk that he was proposing to scrap the last major apartheid laws covering land and race classification.

In return, the government recognises the right of ANC supporters to be members of the armed wing and the group's right to peaceful protest.

"We made it clear that we are not going to surrender weapons, now and even in the future. Those structures, arms and men, are to remain where they are," ANC official Mathew Phosa said later.

But Law and Order Minister Adrian Vlok said he wanted weapons hidden during the ANC's 29-year war against apar-

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Yeltsin says Gorbachev freezing reforms

MOSCOW (R) — Russian leader Boris Yeltsin has accused Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev of freezing reform and moving to roll back democratic changes he launched himself. The independent Post-Soviet News Agency has said.

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Hardliners seeking Gorbachev's ouster claim he will meet them

MOSCOW (AP) — A small group of hard-liners who advocate dictatorship have claimed that President Mikhail Gorbachev has agreed to meet and discuss their plan to replace him. But Vladimir Voronin, head of the self-proclaimed National Salvation Committee, admitted he has no date yet for the meeting.

"I spoke with Gorbachev face-to-face" and he promised a formal meeting sometime in the future, Voronin said. He refused to elaborate on his encounter with the president, and it was not immediately possible to verify his claim.

"There is a serious problem in the fact that the country's leadership has clearly swerved to the right in its policies, towards the freezing of reform and democratic processes," quoted Yeltsin as saying.

"There is a clear retreat from perestroika, which was begun in 1985 at the initiative of the president (Gorbachev). Now, also at his initiative, it is being wrapped up."

The agency said Yeltsin was speaking on Friday to a delegation of U.S. senators touring the Soviet Union to study human rights in Moscow and the Baltic republics.

Radicals say there is a clear drive by the Kremlin and the Communist Party to oust Yeltsin as president of the Russian Federation.

"We think that if there is to be any relief to sanctions, that should be in response to particular actions, not promises, not undertakings to do something, but actual things that have been done to change the system," he said Saturday.

He did say, however, the first embargoes to be dropped would probably be those against sports and travel.

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